

Narrator:

This is an America.gov podcast.

For print versions of articles, multimedia, and subscription information, visit www.america.gov.

The United States was once the only country with a law making it a crime to bribe a foreign official. Now, many countries have such laws and investigators and prosecutors from different countries cooperate by using two international conventions that make their work easier.

One convention, which went into force in 1999, is the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Anti-Bribery Convention. It took several years for countries to ratify the convention and bring their criminal statutes into line, but today 38 nations have done so, including eight non-OECD countries. Those countries plus the OECD's members represent not only most of the major entities in the world's economy, but the homes of many multinational corporations.

A second and even broader convention is the United Nations Convention against Corruption, which went into force in 2005. This convention has been ratified by 138 nations, but monitoring compliance is still a work in progress. Five G20 countries - Germany, India, Italy, Japan and Saudi Arabia - have yet to ratify that convention. Despite progress against corruption around the world, business executives still use bribes to secure contracts, crooked leaders loot public coffers, and dishonest politicians and public officials still line their pockets. Such problems are not confined to poor countries; even some of the wealthiest nations find it politically difficult to enforce laws and dedicate the resources needed to fight corruption. Since the passage of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act of 1977 under then-President Jimmy Carter, it has been a crime for U.S. companies to bribe foreign officials and politicians to secure business. For decades, the United States was alone in this anti-corruption fight and some executives complained that the law forced them to compete in overseas markets with one arm tied behind their backs. But instead of repealing the law, Congress directed the executive branch to get other nations on board so bribery would no longer be regarded as a cost of doing business.

U.S. Officials at the U.S. Department of Justice now call efforts to fight international corruption and criminalize business bribes "a global initiative." These officials were alone for 20 years, but now they enjoy close partnerships with several other countries' prosecutors.

President Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev agreed in April to reduce nuclear arsenals below the levels called for in the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or START I. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said at a press conference October 13 in Moscow with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov that the United States and Russia are making progress in replacing the current treaty and easing perceived tensions over nuclear weapons.

Clinton said she is looking forward to Russia's leadership in the Global Nuclear Security Summit next April, and that the global initiative to secure vulnerable nuclear materials is another important joint endeavor. Lavrov agreed that the technical negotiating teams working on the successor agreement to START I have shown "considerable progress."

President Obama has said that the world's two leading nuclear powers must lead by example. Obama and Medvedev signed a joint understanding to reduce nuclear warheads and the means to deliver them by up to a third from current levels. Between them, the U.S. and Russia own more than 95 percent of the world's nuclear weapons. The mutual agreement to reduce nuclear arsenals is part of a broader goal of reducing nuclear tensions across the globe and preventing rogue states and extremists from obtaining some of the world's most dangerous weapons. Obama and Medvedev said they wanted to take concrete steps toward the long-term goal of

disarmament while sending a powerful message to countries such as North Korea and Iran, whose controversial nuclear development programs are subject to U.N. Security Council sanctions and expanded scrutiny.

The United States and Russia have agreed to reduce their strategic nuclear warheads and the means to deliver them, which includes long-range strategic bombers, intercontinental ballistic missiles and nuclear-powered submarines.

Registration for the 2011 Diversity Visa Lottery is open from October 2 to November 30, 2009. Each year, the U.S. government makes 50,000 permanent residence visas, commonly known as "green cards," available through the Diversity Immigrant Visa program. Visa applicants are selected through a computer-generated, random lottery. Those who are selected have the opportunity to take the next steps in the visa application process.

Applicants must submit their entries electronically, and they are strongly urged to apply early because heavy demand on the lottery Web site may cause delays as the deadline nears. To enter the visa lottery, applicants must register online at www.dvlottery.state.gov. Applications will be accepted until noon U.S. Eastern Standard Time on Monday, November 30, 2009.

This version of the Diversity Visa Lottery is known as DV-2011 because the visas will be issued during fiscal year 2011 (October 1, 2010–September 30, 2011). Lottery winners will be notified by postal mail (not e-mail) between May and July 2010 and will receive instructions on how to complete the application process for a DV-2011 visa.

The lottery is open only to persons from eligible countries who meet certain education or work experience requirements, such as a high school education or its equivalent, or two years of qualifying work experience. Eligible countries are those with low immigration rates to the United States.

There is no fee for entering the lottery or downloading and completing the application form. The State Department warns applicants to be wary of fraudulent schemes asking for money, fraudulent e-mails, and Web sites posing as official U.S. government sites. Each person may enter the lottery only once and spouses may each submit an application.

Both a press release and general information on the DV-2011 Diversity Visa Lottery are available on the State Department Web site at www.state.gov.

This podcast is produced by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Information Programs. Links to other Internet sites or opinions expressed should not be considered an endorsement of other content and views.